U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Production and Marketing Administration
821 Market Street, Room 609
San Francisco 3, California
Information Service
Western Area

Approx. Time: 15 min.
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YOUR FAMILY'S FOOD
(Weekly Script No. 129)

(Time all scripts in advance. Suggest you make any changes desirable to fit script to local picture. News releases from this office, also PMA Summary are good sources of additional material.)

SUBJECT: FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

PARTICIPANTS: Announcer
PMA

BANGING OF GAVEL

ANNOUNCER: Your Family's Food! This is YOUR program, brought to you by the United States Department of Agriculture....YOUR program to keep you up to date on the many factors that influence YOUR food supply.

And here, once more, is _____of the _____ office of the Production and Marketing Administration. And our subject today, _____?

PMA: Well, I thought I'd discuss something that has an important bearing on food production and conservation - something that not everyone thinks of in connection with food.

ANNOUNCER: What's that _____?

PMA: First, I have a little memory test for you. Do you know why the 9th of October is an important anniversary?

ANNOUNCER: Let me see now...the 9th of October...sure you don't mean the 12th of October, when Christopher Columbus discovered this fair land.

PMA: No. Try again. The 9th of October.

ANNOUNCER: Well.....no, you have me there.....what anniversary is the 9th of October?

PMA: The anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire.

ANNOUNCER: The one where Mrs. O'Leary's celebrated cow is alleged to have kicked over the lantern in 1871?

PMA: That's the one.

ANNOUNCER: All right. Where do we go from there?

PMA: To the week of October 6th to 12th. That's National Fire Prevention Week.

ANNOUNCER: Maybe it's about time we had one, too. There've been a lot of fires lately.

PMA: That will do for the understatement of the week. Why, did you know, _____, that the siren and the clang of the fire bell can be heard once every two minutes in this country.

ANNOUNCER: You mean we have a serious fire <u>every two minutes?</u>

PMA: Every two minutes, day and night, somebody's home or place of business is burning.

ANNOUNCER: That's bad.

PMA: It's very bad. We haven't enough houses to go around now.

ANNOUNCER: And the same is true of food, and all the other goods the whole world needs to get back to a peacetime basis.

PMA: That's why we have a national fire prevention week.

ANNOUNCER: Tell me, do most of our many fires occur in the city? I should think they would.

PMA: The surprising truth is that fire last year destroyed two hundred million dollars in rural property...that's nearly half the total fire losses.

ANNOUNCER: Two hundred million dollars! That's a lot of money.

PMA: Moreover, fire last year destroyed 30,000,000 acres of forest land, with a direct loss of 38 million dollars. But even these figures aren't so important as the fact that more than 3 thousand 5 hundred people lost their lives in those rural fires.

ANNOUNCER: That's truly shocking.

PMA: And here's the point, _____. Almost all of those tragic fires, that cost so many lives, and so much valuable...in some cases, irreplaceable...property could have been prevented. Most of them were caused by sheer carelessness.

ANNOUNCER: Just how do you mean? Give me an example.

PMA: All right, that's easy. Of course, you've had the lights go out at your house?

ANNOUNCER: Yes, everybody has, I imagine.

PMA: What do you do when that happens?

ANNOUNCER: Well.....the first thing I do is get the flashlight and look in the fuse box.

PMA: That's standard operating procedure, all right. What then?

ANNOUNCER: Well, then I check the fuses and if one's blown out, I hunt around and find a new one and put it in.

PMA: Suppose you can't find one?

ANNOUNCER: Then I put a penny in the socket and screw the old fuse back in on top of it. But why all these questions about my adventures with the fuse box?

PMA: Because you've described the actions almost anyone goes through in circumstances like that. And it all adds up to a terrific fire hazard.

ANNOUNCER: Really?

PMA: Sure. Look. The fuse is the safety valve of the house's electrical system. It's made so it's weaker than the wire.

ANNOUNCER: Yes, I know that. So it will blow out in case the wiring is overloaded.

PMA: Right. The fuse blows when the wiring is overloaded. Now when you put in a penny, or a thirty ampere fuse where a fifteen ampere fuse was before, you make the wire the weakest link in the electrical chain.

ANNOUNCER: I see what you're driving at. If the wires are overloaded, they'll overheat.

PMA: And sooner or later, they'll burn through the insulation and set the wall of the house where they're located on fire.

ANNOUNCER: I see that all right. Matter of fact, I knew that before. I just didn't stop to think about it.

PMA: And what did I say caused most of the fires?

ANNOUNCER: Carelessness. O.K. Score one for you. I'll watch that one from now on.

PMA: There are other things you want to watch, too. For instance, what does your wife do when the bag of the vacuum cleaner gets full?

ANNOUNCER: She dumps it out, of course.

PMA: Into the incinerator chute, maybe.

ANNOUNCER: Is that dangerous?

PMA: You bet it is. Any dust that will burn will also explode, especially if there's an open flame somewhere around while the dust is still in the air.

ANNOUNCER: Any kind of dust?

PMA: Just about. Even flour or cornstarch....coal dust, wood or sawdust.

ANNOUNCER: You know, that's a new one on me.

PMA: Just tell your wife to be sure to wrap the dust from the vacuum cleaner in a couple of sheets of newspaper, and that hazard will be avoided.

ANNOUNCER: I certainly will. What about this matter of so called "spontaneous combustion" or "spontaneous ignition" that I've heard about. Like damp hay on a farm. Is that really so?

PMA: Yes it is, and not only with damp hay on a farm. A closet that has oily rags in it is apt to be a fire starter too. Any animal or vegetable oil on any combustible material may ignite by itself if it's left alone, and if it has just the right amount of humidity.

ANNOUNCER: That's something else to watch out for, and something to be corrected by good housekeeping.

PMA: Fire Prevention week is a good time to make this sort of a check on all our houses...to clean out any collections of rubbish that we have lying around in the attic or cellar or closets....and to put all oily rags in closed metal containers.

ANNOUNCER: You know, I've heard that most fires are started by people who fail to put out cigarettes and cigars and pipes.

PMA: Yes, that's true. Fires can start in upholstery and burn for a long time before being noticed.

ANNOUNCER: Then, too, people go to sleep while smoking in bed. The next thing they know, the mattress is in flames--and so are they.

PMA: Although smoking in bed is dangerous, it's not nearly as risky as to smoke while cleaning anything with gasoline.

ANNOUNCER: Surely, everybody knows better than to do that.

PMA: You'd think so, all right, but a lot of fires are started just that way. Cleaning with gasoline, or benzine or naptha in a home is a most dangerous occupation anyway.

ANNOUNCER: Even if you aren't smoking, and don't have a fire around?

PMA: Even then. The fact is that no home is big enough for the safe use of gasoline. When the fumes mix with air, they explode very easily. Even a spark will do it. And if that happens to you, you won't be around to see the house burn down.

ANNOUNCER: And I'd like to add that any home that is wired for electricity can have a random spark. So the watchword is DON'T clean with gasoline in the house.

PMA: There are lots of ways to start fires. Those we've mentioned, and others...like failing to pull out the cord on the iron when a housewife goes off to other tasks. A defective chimney or flue, or a defective stove or furnace is equally dangerous.

ANNOUNCER: And hot ashes from a stove or furnace, if not handled properly.

PMA: All of these things add up to carelessness. The experts figure that 90 percent of all fires could have been prevented.

ANNOUNCER: Are we making any progress on this?

PMA: Not according to the figures. Fire losses in 1945 were greater than in any of the preceding 16 years.

ANNOUNCER: Yes, but that was a war year.

PMA: That's true, but listen to these statistics. For the first four months of 1946, there were 16 fires for every 10 we had last year.

ANNOUNCER: And this is a year when the nation and the world face the distressing problems of feeding and housing its people. You've pointed out very clearly that here in America -- mainly through our own carelessness -- fire takes a great toll of lives and hampers the feeding of our own people as well as the hungry ones abroad.

PMA: In all too many cases, a farm fire is the first stepping stone in the gradual economic breakdown of a thriving family unit.

ANNOUNCER: I can see that a really bad farm fire would be a great handicap.

PMA: The loss of necessary food supplies and the money-cost of replacing destroyed buildings are hurdles that many farmers -- no matter how willing -- can never completely overcome.

ANNOUNCER: If fire losses in 1946 are proving to be even greater than last year -- then we should pay special observance to Fire Prevention Week this time.

PMA: It would be well worth it. President Truman in designating October 6 to 12 as Fire Prevention Week, asked every citizen to do his part by learning how to detect and eliminate all possible causes of fires in his home and in his business.

ANNOUNCER: We've already discussed some of these causes. Now what can each of us do to make sure that pure carelessness won't give fire a chance to start?

PMA: Each citizen -- whether he lives in town or in the country -- whether he rents or owns -- should make a room-by-room inspection of his home in order to discover possible fire hazards. In farm areas, local fire officials will help in looking over houses and farm buildings. Farmers also should make firebreaks around haystacks, out-buildings and maturing crops that are liable to create a fire menace.

ANNOUNCER: That procedure ought to cut down fires quite a bit. But what if fire does break out in spite of all precautions?

PMA: Well, in that case, keep calm -- as you probably won't be cool -- collect your wits and size up the situation. Then notify the fire department.

ANNOUNCER: Supposing there is no fire department.

PMA: In rural areas, families should have home fire extinguishers conveniently located in homes and outbuildings, which will work efficiently <u>when</u> needed.

ANNOUNCER: Have you got any pointers on using a fire extinguisher?

PMA: Well, the best thing to do if the fire is <u>inside</u> the house, is to stand near the door, so that any sudden burst of flame won't trap you. Aim directly at whatever is burning -- except in the case of such things as fats or gasoline. Then, you should aim just above the level of the flaming liquid to avoid splashing and spreading the fire.

ANNOUNCER: That seems logical. How about electrical fires -- how should they be put out?

PMA: The first thing to do in the case of an electric fire is to turn off the current. If this is not possible, use sand, dirt, flour or some other dry material which is handy. Don't use water unless you have first turned off the current at the master switch. Your local fire chief can give you details on the best ways to fight various kinds of fires.

ANNOUNCER: I guess it would be a good idea to brush up on the proper methods.

PMA: Yes. And it's wise for every member of the family to know exactly what to do if a serious blaze should break out in the home. For instance, if a person were trapped on the second floor of a burning house, his first action naturally would be to rush for the stairway.

ANNOUNCER: Is that wrong?

PMA: You bet your life it is -- and when I say that -- I mean it literally. You see, when a house is burning, the stairway usually acts like a flue -- and gases from flames downstairs often come billowing up. Another important thing is to keep doors closed. Many a disastrous fire could have been kept under control if the doors between the flames and the threatened rooms had remained shut.

ANNOUNCER: You mean the draft caused by opening the doors just gave encouragement to the fire?

PMA: That's right. Many lives have been lost in just this fashion. One sure way to tell whether or not it's safe to open the door is to put your hand on it. If it feels hot to the touch -- then it almost certainly would be fatal to open it.

ANNOUNCER: Those are some valuable suggestions, _____. Let's hope that we take them to heart and stop being careless about fire. The United States holds the world's record for destruction of property by fire, I believe.

PMA: You're quite right there. And a disgraceful record it is, too. Although we can't stop all fires in one week, we can, between October 6th and 12th, pledge ourselves to eliminate the causes of fires in homes and on farms -- and to initiate community safety programs. Remember that with a little thought and effort, we can make every week Fire Prevention Week.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you very much, _____. Friends, that was your Production and Marketing Administration representative, _____. YOUR FAMILY'S FOOD will be presented again next week at this same time. This broadcast, a public service feature over station _____, is presented for farm and city listeners in _____. Your announcer has been _____.